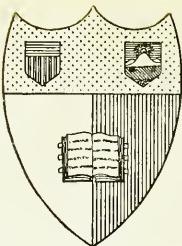


THE POETS'
CORNER



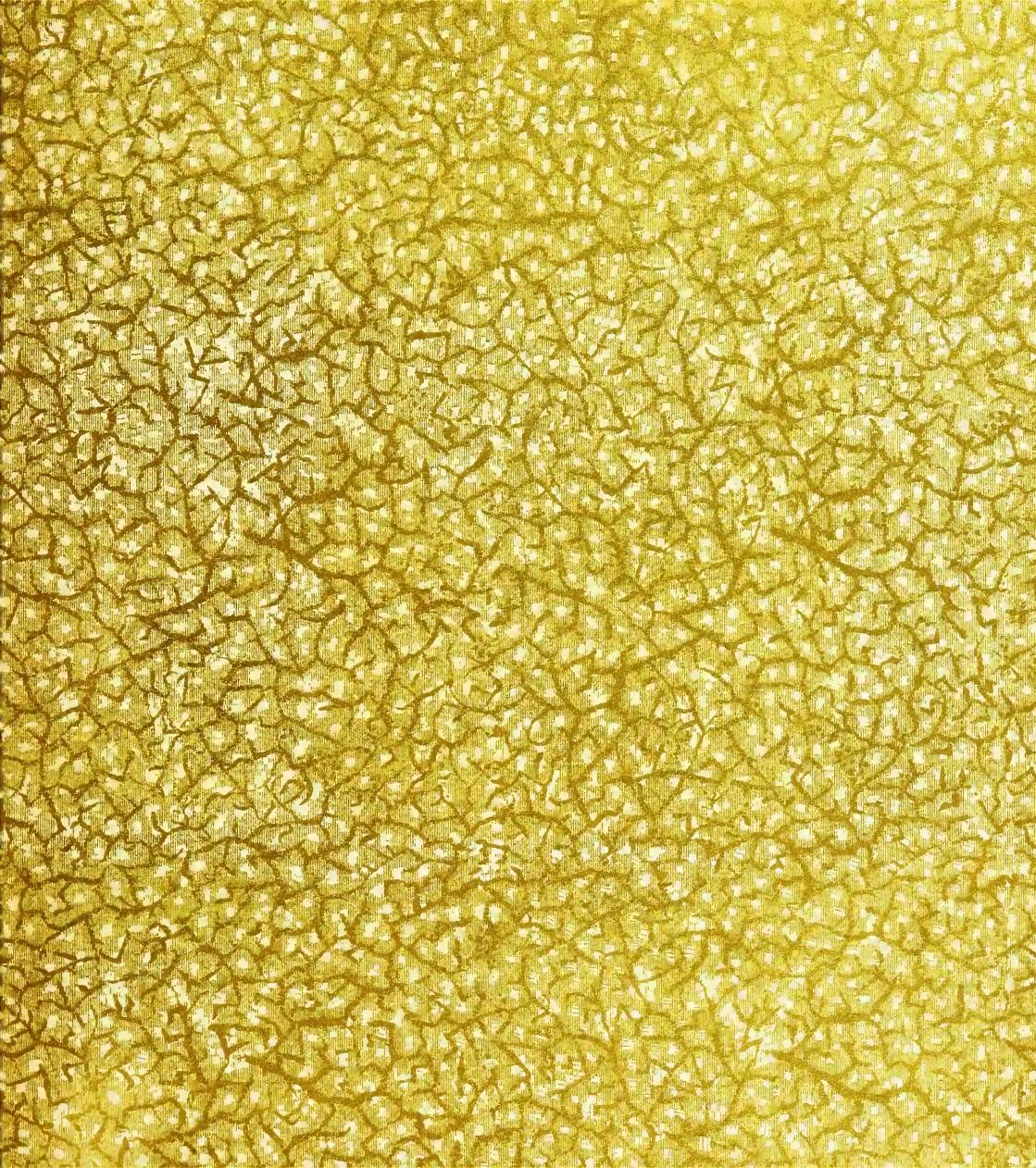
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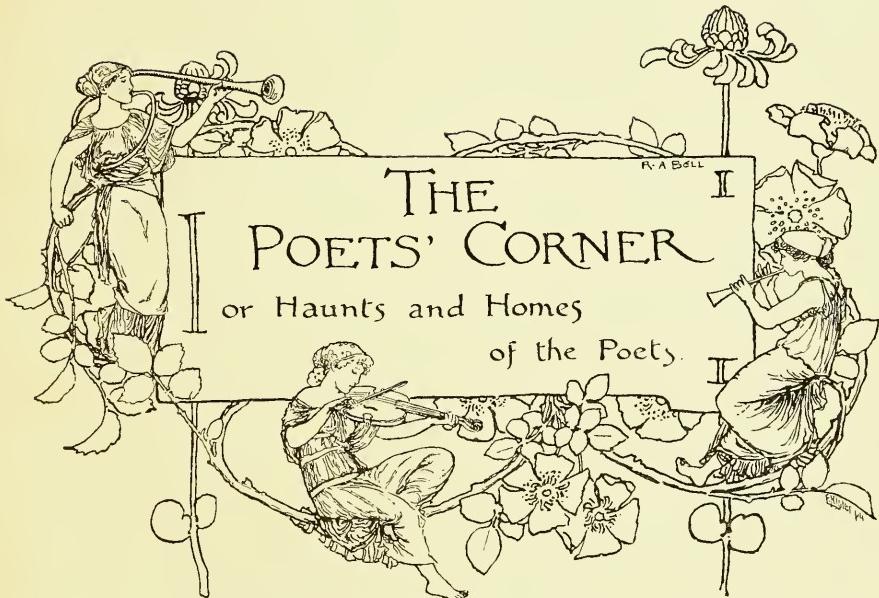
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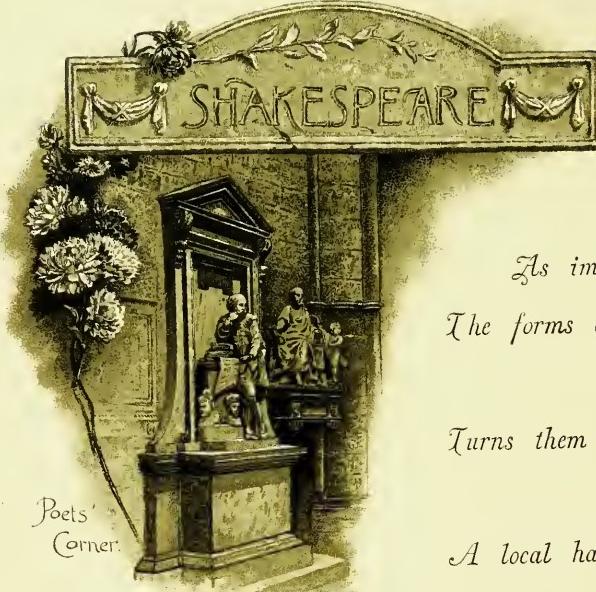




THE POETS' CORNER

or Haunts and Homes
of the Poets.

R. A. BELL



*As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown,
the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes,
and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.*

"Midsummer Night's Dream."

*How many goodly creatures
are there here!*

How beauteous mankind is!

*O brave new world,
That has such people in't!*

"Tempest."



The Poets' Corner,
or
Haunts and Homes
of
The Poets,

by



Illustrated by
Allan Barraud,

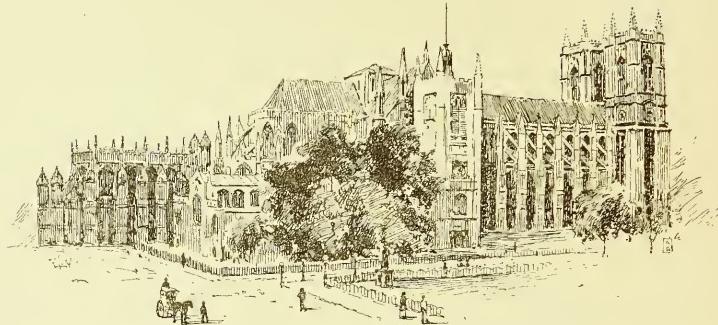
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The Poets' Corner.

Where are the mighty poets gone?
Where are their burning spirits fled?
Is it beyond the stars and sun,
And do they sleep among the dead?
Or who will wake their songs again,
Or strike their silent harps once more,
And sing, in these sad days, a strain
Of chivalry and love of yore?

*I tread the ways that know them still,
Where once they loved and sang of old,
The quiet glebe, the breezy hill,
The sunny bay, the wintry wold;
Churchyard and river, hall and tree,
Each has a story of its own;
But where can all the singers be,
Where have their burning spirits flown?*

*And then I tread the Abbey dust,
And scan the legends speaking fair,
The storied urn, the sculptured bust,
And think to find them sleeping there.
But no! They ask not such a bed,
Death hath for them no lot, or part,
The Poets live! They are not dead,
They live within their people's heart!*

Fred E. Weatherly.

CHAUCER.

DEAR old England has a picturesque beauty of its own, in hill and dale, in moorland and purling stream; and this natural loveliness is enhanced by the charms of association. To the antiquarian, the historian, and the lover of literature, every inch of it is ground hallowed by the glorious deeds, sufferings, and achievements of men of genius, of the glorious company of martyrs who perished for their faith, and of warriors who bled for the cause they upheld. It is impossible to think of Warwickshire apart from Shakespeare, or of the Lake Country without recalling the sober figure of Wordsworth, while the mere mention of Surrey and Kent conjures up a vision of Geoffrey Chaucer, and of his merry calvacade of Canterbury pilgrims. The father of English poetry, however, was not country bred, London claims him for its own.

This soldier, courtier, man of learning, was, tradition says, born in Thames Street, and, if we accept his own statement, his birth occurred somewhere about the middle of the fourteenth century. Himself of gentle birth, his youth was spent in the atmosphere of the Court, as page to a Royal Duchess, and afterwards as valet to Edward III., with whom he was often at Woodstock, the Summer residence of the Royal Family. The glory of Woodstock has now departed; its great deer park, the incomparable maze in which Fair Rosamond's bower stood, the glades wherein the boy-poet walked and mused have vanished. It is in London that we must look for traces of Chaucer. When he held

the post of Controller of Customs, the poet lived in a house at Aldgate. We may picture to ourselves his hooded figure threading its way through the City's narrow lanes to the Postern Gate of the river by the Tower; passing through Fleet Street, along the Strand, and in every corner of the London of those days—a city of stately monasteries and hovels, of fortified mansions,

and bishops' palaces surrounded by gardens, of churches, shops, and inns, from which hung innumerable signs. It is in Southwark that his figure seems to us most familiar. There stood the "Tabard Inn," the "gentil ostilrie," with its overhanging galleries supported by thick wooden pillars, its wide courtyard, and roomy guest chambers, whence the pilgrims started for Canterbury, to worship at Thomas à Becket's Tomb, one April morning of 1382.

Ruins of wayside chapels still mark their pleasant halting places. They stopped at Reigate, where the Town Hall stands on the site of one of these chapels. At Dorking, at the corner of Westhumble Lane, they found another, of which nothing now remains but a heap of moss-grown stones. Their route can be plainly traced by a line of yew trees, that winds up hill and down dale, through Surrey and Kent, and still indicates the "Pilgrims' Way." The trees do not grow in an unbroken line. Sometimes a clump of them forms a retreat, through whose shade the summer sun cannot pierce; sometimes a single tree, a spectre out of the past, flings its wild and twisted branches athwart the road; though here and there the yews grow in a long and orderly file. It was a gallant band that passed under the shadow of those hoary trees; "Well nine and twenty in a companie of sondry folk." Among them rode a



"veray parfit gentil knight," with his young squire, who sang and played the flute all day, and

"Embrouded was he—as it were a mede,
Alle ful of freshe flouers white and rede."

A dainty prioress, whose smile "was ful simple and coy," was accompanied by a nun, "that was hire chapelleine and preestes three;" and the comely "wife of Bath," wearing hose of fine scarlet red and a "hat as broad as a buckler or a targe," rode among the Pilgrims. Thereafter comes a "gentil pardoner," a "wanton and a mery frere, an able abbot on his palfrey," a "fat swan loved he best of any roast;" and a lusty miller who

"A baggepipe wel coude he blowe and soun,
And therewithal he brought us out of toune."

Prominent among them all is the poet's familiar figure leading the way. Let us imagine that the pilgrims have reached Canterbury; hot and dusty they enter Mercery Lane, that is crowded with traders in sacred wares. Before them rises the great cathedral, limned against the eternal freshness of the spring sky. They make their way through the lane, lined on either side with houses, the projecting upper storeys of which nearly meet above their heads. The old "Chequer Inn" stands at the corner of the High Street—every vestige of the inn has long since disappeared, its site, only, is known. The Pilgrims dismount; they enter the cathedral, through the church-yard, upon which now stands the beautiful angel-sculptured porch. Above the choir, reached by a flight of marble steps, and seen through a vista of columns, stands the shrine of the murdered Archbishop, blazing with gold and precious stones, and laden with offerings. Chaucer kneels, the print of his knees helps to wear away the pavement there. Doubtless the Prioress unpins that brooch on which is graven "Amor Vincit Omnia"; the wife of Bath detaches some jewel from her person; a sturdy franklin parts with one of the rings he wears outside his glove, and all the treasures are dropped into the shrine. There the



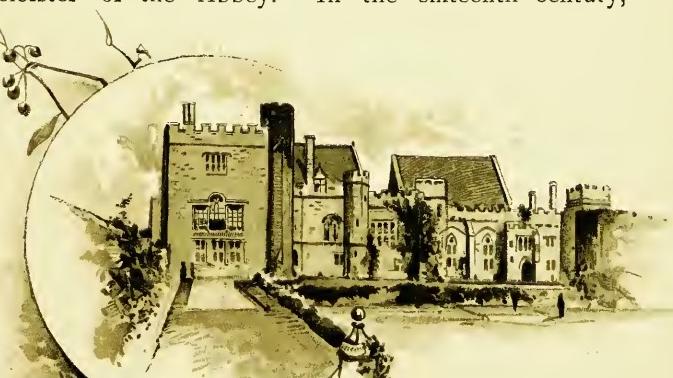
Chaucer
Memorial

Canterbury.

Mary's, Westminster. Henry VII's. Chapel now covers the spot. Chaucer was interred in the cloister of the Abbey. In the sixteenth century, a poet, Nicholas Brigham, caused his remains to be removed to the south aisle, where he also erected a monument to the memory of Chaucer, the English troubadour.

offerings will remain, until the day when Henry VIII will order the ashes of Thomas à Becket to be scattered to the winds, and the shrine to be despoiled. Blue Beard, we are told, carried off two heavy chests, and twenty-three carts full of treasure from the tomb. Torn stones and a worn pavement alone mark the spot where the shrine, stood five centuries ago; but the yew trees still point the way, and Chaucer's immortal poem still records that memorable journey.

The poet died before his work was completed. He expired on the 25th of October, 1400, in the house situated in the quiet garden of the Monks of St.



Penshurst
Place.

SPE&N SER.

THE great “Kentish shrine,” Penshurst, the home of the Sidneys, is closely associated with the name of Edmund Spenser. Every glade and alley of the park awake reminiscences of the poet. It was here he wrote the “Shepherd’s Calendar.” It is easy to realise how the stately surroundings and the characteristic beauty of Kent, the “Garden of England,” gave the decisive moulding touches to Spenser’s genius; and how fortunate it was that the formative period of his life should have been spent in such a house and in such a county. Such were the early environments which helped to shape his spirit to large issues. As we stand under “Sidney’s Oak,” we almost expect to see the poet and his host stroll across that grass-grown pleasance, under the shadow of the avenue of mighty limes and beeches, and make their way towards the venerable tree.

The house speaks eloquently to us of these noble youths. Every room seems to breathe of their presence and of their gentle ways of life. Lady Sidney’s mandoline lies in one chamber; but little stretch of imagination is needed to hear a strain of ghostly music wandering through the gallery that is hung with portraits of a vanished race; or to see the feast laid on the master’s raised table, in the Baron’s hall, on whose walls glistens the armour of many a gallant Sidney, and of their kinsmen. The retainers are assembled, surely Spenser will shortly enter with the head of the house,

“The President of noblesse and of chevalrie.”

A thrill of delight and surprise ran through the Court of Queen Elizabeth, when “The Shepherd’s Calendar” was published. A new poet had arisen; no great national poet had appeared since Chaucer had passed into the silence nearly two hundred years before. Who was this Edmund



Spenser who once again drew such tender and flexible sweetness from the English tongue? Spenser was born in London, of poor parents. He was educated at "The Merchant Taylors' School," and entered Cambridge as a sizar, or serving clerk. He was an excellent Greek scholar, and had a thorough knowledge of the "natural and moral philosophy" of his day. In 1580, he was appointed secretary to Lord Arthur Grey de Wilton—the *Artegal* of the "Faerie Queene"—whom he accompanied to Ireland to aid in the suppression of the great Desmond uprising in that unhappy land. The English Government determined to plant Munster with English colonists; Kilcolman Castle and its woods and river were given to Spenser, and it was there he wrote "The Faerie Queene." The ruins of Kilcolman Castle now stand a solitary pile dominating a desolate moorland. In Spenser's time the scene must have possessed some grace, for he speaks of its pleasantness and celebrates—

"The green alders by Mulla's shore."

To the north stretched the wild country—half-bog, half-forest and the wooded hill of Aharlo.

"Of old the best and fairest hill
That was in all this Holy Island's heights.

In his day Aharlo had become the haunt of outlaws. At Kilcolman, surrounded by the ever present spectacle of desolation, of anarchy and woe, he wrote the adventures of the "Red Cross Knight;" and the poem is coloured and influenced by the author's surroundings and conditions of life. The mournful land is often traversed by his hero; the solitary tracks barren "both of man and beasts," and the "great woods," where danger lurked, and which Spenser paints in vivid words, form a picture of the Ireland of his day. The famished figures creeping out upon their

hands and knees, "for their legs could not bear them," he says, when describing the result of the wars in Munster, "speaking like ghosts rising out of their graves," inspired some of his weird fancies. Sir Walter Raleigh visited Spenser, and listened, under the shades of the green alders, to the first books of his host's great poem. At the persuasion of the dreamer of "Eldorado," the poet returned to England, and was introduced to Queen Elizabeth. She bestowed her brightest smile upon him, and accepted the dedication of the poem. It is difficult, now, to realise the enthusiasm that was aroused by the publication of the "Faerie Queene." It became "the delight of every accomplished gentleman, the model of every poet, the solace of every soldier." Spenser lingered awhile in England, then, finding, as *Colin Clout* explains, that the selfish intrigues of Court life are not suited to the meditations of a lowly shepherd swain, returned to Kilcolman Castle. A year or two later the smouldering discontent in Ireland was fanned anew into open rebellion. Out of the woods of Aharlo, wild figures flocked one night towards Kilcolman. To them, the sweet singer who dwelt there, was but a hated usurper. Spenser, at the time, was writing, or had just written, last words of holy meditation:

"But, henceforth, all shall rest eternally,
With him that is the God of Sabaoth hight;
O! that great Sabaoth God, grant me that Sabbath's sight,"

when the rebels set fire to the Castle. Mystery hangs over the proceedings of that night of terror and anguish. Spenser escaped, with his wife and his children, with the exception of one newly-born babe, who perished in the flames. The poet arrived in England a ruined and a broken-hearted man, and died at an inn in King Street, Westminster. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, by Chaucer's side. The Earl of Essex defrayed the expenses of his funeral. "His hearse," says Camden, "was attended by poets; and mournful elegies and poems, with the pens that wrote them, were thrown into his tomb."

SHAKESPEARE.

ONE of the few traditions that have been preserved of England's greatest poet relates of his passionate attachment to his native district, that even in the heyday of his career he visited Stratford-on-Avon at least once every year. In 1615 a proposal was made to enclose the adjacent common land of Welcombe. The poet appears to have been consulted on the subject, and, according to the preserved document "Mr. Shakespeare" told the agent "that he was not able to bear the enclosing of Welcombe." This midland district of England was for a youthful genius an ideal environment:

"With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers, and wide skirted meads."

The renowned Forest of Arden, "the highest franchise of noble and princely pleasure," and Charlecote Park, the scene of Shakespeare's reported deer-stealing exploits, are not far distant from Stratford, which was a prosperous important town in the end of the sixteenth century. Only one or two generations previous to the birth of the great dramatist, Warwickshire, and the neighbouring central counties of England had been torn asunder by civil dissensions, had been the battle ground of the prolonged Wars of the Roses. During his childhood many veteran soldiers or their immediate descendants were still alive, and doubtless filled the boy's greedy ears with stirring tales of fights and heroic deeds. It is this intimate knowledge of the struggles between Yorkists and Lancastrians which make his historical dramas the



best chronicles extant of that troublous time. The Royal residence of Woodstock was within easy reach of Stratford, so the youth must have been familiar with the pageantry of Court life long before he came into more personal contact with it in after life.

Shakespeare was endowed with deep insight into human nature, with broad sympathies, and, in addition to his vivid imagination, he possessed the invaluable faculty of learning through vicarious knowledge; so that his mind became a great storehouse from which he could draw endless material. His vast knowledge of men and manners was gained principally in England, although it is generally supposed that he visited foreign lands. Nevertheless, the people of his dramas are for the most part of English type; and his descriptions of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Medieval Italy find their counterpart in Warwickshire and in London. His merchants, watchmen, gay revellers, nobles, frank-speaking, true-hearted ladies are the inhabitants of the London of Elizabeth. Doubtless he met Falstaff at the "Mermaid Tavern," and stood him many a glass of sack for love of his wit. There he exchanged sallies with Dame Quickly, and looked of a night through the dark streets for the glimmer of Dogberry's lantern. At the houses of his friends, Lord Southampton, Lord Pembroke, Lord Essex, he saw the flower of English Society, and among them, doubtless, the blithe gallant, the courtier Benedick, the gay Mercutio, Polonius, melancholy Jacques and grave Antonio. Perhaps he was one of the guests on the occasion when the Countess of Pembroke entertained Ben Jonson at Crosby House, and there met and talked with Portia, laughing Rosalind, and beautiful Imogen.

His own early courtship was the prototype of the many beautiful love episodes in his works, which culminate in the passion and tragic deaths of Romeo and Juliet. A rustic walk of a mile and a half lay between his father's house and the cottage of Ann Hathaway, who became his wife. The path he so often trod runs through fields and grassy lanes sweet in spring and summer with the perfume of hawthorn

and of wild roses. Hard by, beyond the line of trees, Shottery Brook gleams and ripples; and when the ardent lover went in quest of his mistress, he caught the first sight of her thatched-roof cottage as he crossed the wooden bridge over the tumbling cascade of the stream.

Stratford itself was, and is, a perfect model of an English country town. The perfect parish church, is itself an epitome of our history since the Norman Conquest. In Shakespeare's day the crypt or charnel-house, part of the original Saxon church still existed; and very similar to it "to whose foul mouth no loathsome air breathes in," was the vault that Juliet saw,

"O'ercovered quite with dead men's rattling bones,
With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls."

In 1597 he bought the "Great House" for his wife and daughters to live in; thither he retired some years later, and there Drayton and Ben Jonson were entertained by him the day before his death. He was buried in the chancel of the church at Stratford, where his monument holds an honoured place on the north wall above the altar rails. Westminster Abbey also contains a monument in the Poets' Corner to the Immortal Bard, with an epitaph engraved on the pedestal by Ben Jonson.

After Shakespeare's death that cynical but faithful friend wrote of him: "I loved the man, and do honour his memory on this side of idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature, had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expressions."



MILTON.

DEAR, Cockney London, has been the birthplace of a long roll of poets. Chaucer, Spenser, Herrick, Cowley, Pope, first drew breath in it; and Milton was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, well within sound of Bow Bells. Never did poet, we think, change his residence so often as did the author of "Paradise Lost;" and wherever he went his house had a garden, a peep of sky, a strip of close-shaven lawn, where he might—

"Rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth show,
And every herb that sips the dew."

Milton was a Puritan, touched with a Greek delight in the joy and loveliness of life. His father, a "scrivener," by profession, and a "man of ingeniose tastes," was a skilled proficient on the lute and the organ; a composer of madrigals, and, in his day, a famed writer of sacred songs. His son inherited the father's love of music. In his school and college days at St. Paul's, and Christchurch at Cambridge, we can picture Milton, in his leisure moments, playing on the viol, or practising on the organ of the college chapel. It was, probably, his love of trees, which gave rise to the tradition, that mulberry trees had been planted by his hand in Cambridge. There is a hoary patriarch still standing in the Christchurch College garden which is associated with his name. On leaving college, 1632, when he was four-and-twenty, the young man gave up all thoughts of taking orders, and returned to his father's property at Horton, in Buckinghamshire. Wooded solitudes, and meadows, crowned in the distance by Windsor Castle "bosom'd high in tufted trees," were the haunts wherein he "nourished a youth sublime." Every step of that



Milton's House,
Chalfont-St. Giles.

"Paradise Regained." Seldom has poet had so privileged a youth as Milton's; seldom so forlorn an old age.

A visit to Italy, which lasted some fifteen months, closed the first blissful period. The traveller hastened his return to serve with his pen Cromwell's Parliamentary party, then rising to power. The second period of his life began with a deplorable blunder. A dismal

beautiful country, whence London is so easy of access, is classic ground. Its woods, its meadows and heaths are twice hallowed by memories of Milton; for the scenes that saw him in the vigour and beauty of his manhood, beheld

him, in after years, old, destitute, and blind. These dells and forest aisles that inspired "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Comus," "Lycidas," saw him brood over the last touches of "Paradise Lost," and dream out



Bay of Naples.

chapter in life's "Comedy of Errors" might be furnished by a record of the mistakes made by men of genius in the choice of their wives. The story of Milton's first matrimonial venture would rank among the foremost of such blunders. The poet had removed to a house in Aldersgate, large enough to accommodate pupils. One day Milton went to Shotover, in Oxfordshire, apparently for a holiday; he returned at the end of a month with a wife of seventeen. Mary Powell, the girl he had chosen for his life's companion, was the daughter of a jovial Royalist, who kept open house. Her life had been spent amidst gay and reckless surroundings. She cared nothing for intellectual pursuits. Before the honeymoon was over the bride's soul quailed at the dulness, the solitariness, the frugality of her lot.

She asked, and obtained permission, to visit her family. She then refused to return to her Puritan husband, and her family, under pretence of disapproval of the poet's political views, sanctioned her disobedience. Wounded to the quick by the ignominy heaped upon him, passionately resenting the thralldom of a marriage that was no marriage, Milton wrote his treatises on the justification of divorce. Two years later, when the King's cause was lost, and Milton was one of the foremost figures of the rising party, his father-in-law was ruined, and the wife then sought reconciliation with her husband. Concealed in a friend's house at which Milton visited, she flung herself at his feet; he forgave her, took her home, and magnanimously provided for her impoverished parents. The house in the Barbican to which he then removed has disappeared. There he published his first volume, containing "*L'Allegro*," "*Il Penseroso*," "*Comus*," "*Lycidas*." Mary Milton died seven years later in giving birth to her fourth child.

The house, 19, York Street, Westminster, comparatively lately taken down, occupied the site of the abode where many important domestic events occurred in the life of the poet. There, he became totally blind; there, he wrote some of his most important prose works. There, he took

his second wife, Catherine Woodcock, commemorated in one of his sonnets as "his late espoused saint" in whose person "love, sweetness, and goodness shined." All traces of this home has disappeared—the cotton willow-tree the poet planted, the grounds in which he walked, have vanished; workshops and other buildings cover the place.

Milton's third marriage seems to have been a prosaic and comfortable union. If according to his tenets—

"Nothing lovelier can be found

In woman than to study household good."

Elizabeth Minshull, his third wife, must have proved a thoroughly satisfactory partner. "God have mercy, Betty," he is reported to have said to her, one day, when she had prepared some dainty for his dinner, "I see thou wilt perform according to thy promise, in providing me such dishes as I think fit while I live, and when I die thou knowest I have left thee all."

In his old age, in his ruin and blindness, the poet appeals to our tenderest veneration. We seem to see him as his friend, the Quaker Elmwood saw him at Chalfont, as Dryden describes him, sitting at the organ under those rusty green hangings. We see his pale serene face which life's tragedy has marked with lines of noble beauty. His clear grey eyes seek the light that for him was quenched ere half his days were counted.

"—though blind of sight,
Despised, and thought-extinguished, quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue roused
From under ashes into sudden flames."

Milton died of an attack of gout, on Sunday, November 8th, 1674, and was buried in the chancel of St. Giles, Cripplegate, near his father. His name marks the spot; but there is much reason to fear that the report of the profanation of the leaden coffin, in 1790, and of the dispersion of his bones by the parochial authorities, is true.

SHELLEY.

SHELLEY'S personality is one of the most puzzling in literature. Of no one is it so easy to narrate episodes far from flattering to good sense and right judgment, and yet, of no other poet are there more charming stories to prove how winsome, and loveable, and noble-minded he was. Matthew Arnold was wont to declare that, while every poet "had a bee in his bonnet, Shelley had a whole hive." Of a truth, this strange complex being either repels or irresistibly fascinates, both as a man and as a poet. An eminent French critic has declared that it is impossible to say whether Shelley was more a saintly sinner or a sinful saint. The remark is apt, for the poet is much more the "fallen angel," than the "born sinner."

His childhood, with its early sorrow; his agony of boyhood; his turbulent, enthusiastic youth at Oxford, in Ireland, and in London; his premature and ill-fated marriage; and his abrupt departure for abroad, with his beloved Mary, daughter of his "friend and master," Godwin; these and other episodes make the story of his life in England, one of singular pathos, as well as of puzzling contradictions. It is to Italy, that we look for happy associations of Shelley—always excepting the brief period when he haunted the Thames-reaches about Waldergrave and Marlow, and wrote "Alastor," that wonderful unconscious poetic biography.

The poet's writing and reading-rooms were ever the glens, the mountain-sides, the woods and shores. "Prometheus Unbound" was composed among the solitary wastes of the then weed-grown ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, overlooking Rome. "Adonais," that incomparable dirge for Keats, was first sung near the banks of the Serchio. The exquisite

"Cloud" was inspired by the brooding sweetness of the Pisan sky. At Leghorn, one evening, as he wandered among the myrtle groves, through which darted the fire-flies, a lark poured from the sun-set sky the music that found words in the lyric we all know and love.

At Naples a melancholy oppressed Shelley. Our illustration shows the scenes upon which he looked—the Bay, the blue and everchanging waters of which reflected Vesuvius, "A smoke by day and a flame by night." There, also, the "Stanzas Written in Dejection," that most wonderful poem of despondency ever penned, was inspired by a romantic incident in the poet's life.

How beautiful is this verse—

" Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne, and yet must bear,
Till death, like sleep, might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air,
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony."

"Epipsychedion," that perfect lyrical poem which the poet described to a friend as an "idealised history of my life and feelings," owed its creation to Shelley's ideal love for Emilia Viviani. The young contessina, a girl of great beauty, and of varied mental accomplishments, was shut up, together with her sister, in a convent by their jealous stepmother. The chivalrous, emotional poet heard of it, and he and his wife, after considerable trouble, succeeded in gaining access to the immured one, and solaced her with frequent visits, books, and flowers. Shelley, for a time, fell deeply in love with her, worshipping in her his Ideal of Beauty. Later, he was disillusioned, but fortunately not until he had written this masterpiece.



Boating was ever Shelley's favourite recreation. He was on the water by night and day, in moonlight and sunshine, whether on the lagoons of Venice, on the lake of Como, on the wild and beautiful Gulf of Spezzia; as, in his younger days he had been on the Thames, at Marlow. A short time before the journey from which he was never to return, he rowed out to sea, in a light skiff, with the wife of the friend who was so soon to perish with him. He took her out far from the shore and pausing, rested absorbed in his thoughts, and watched the varying spectacle of sky and sea. She spoke to him, he did not answer; he had forgotten the presence of his terrified companion. The flat-bottomed boat was one which would upset with the slightest jerk. "I will never again put my foot in that horrid coffin—he is seeking after what we all avoid—death," cried his companion, as at length she jumped on shore, little guessing how prophetic were her words.

At Casa Magni, shortly before the fatal journey, two strange, portent-like incidents occurred to Shelley. He saw a vision of Allegra, Byron's daughter, rise from the sea, joyously clap her hands and beckon to him. On another occasion he saw a cloaked figure approach his bedside and sign to him to follow, and when it reached the sitting-room the figure unveiled its face, in which Shelley, horrified, recognised his own features.

On the 1st July, 1822, Shelley and Captain Williams went to Leghorn in their little yacht, the *Ariel*, and there met the Leigh Hunts, who had then arrived from England. On the 8th they set sail to return home. A storm was gathering. Their progress was watched by Captain Roberts from the top of the Leghorn lighthouse, till in the hurricane a whirlwind enveloped the frail boat and hid it from sight. Twenty minutes later, when the darkness of the tempest had cleared away, no sign of the yacht was to be seen. Days of miserable expectancy passed, and at length, news came to the anxious watchers at San Terenzo that the two bodies had been washed ashore. The faithful friend, Trelawney, recognised Shelley by the two volumes in his pocket: one of Keat's poems, with the page

turned down at "The Eve of St. Agnes," the other a Greek tragedy. The bodies were cremated on the shore near Viareggio; wine, myrrh and frankincense were cast into the flames. "More wine was poured over Shelley's dead body, than he drank during the course of his life," says Trelawney, grimly. The poet's ashes were laid in the cemetery adjoining the burial-ground where his little son and Keats lay buried. "I think it is the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld," Shelley had once written to a friend. In "Adonais," he had sung—

"The soft sky smiles—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! Oh! hasten thither!
No more let life divide what death can join together."

The flat stone, encircled with acanthus and violets, which marks the place where the ashes rest, lies under the shadow of one of the weed-grown towers of the ancient Roman wall, and near to the Pyramid of Caius Cestius. The Poet's name, the dates of his birth and death, 4th August, 1792, and 8th July, 1822, and the words *Cor Cordium*, are graven on the stone, with a snatch of "Ariel's" song beneath—

"Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."



Shelley's Tomb
at Rome.

POPE.

“**T**HERE are some advantages accruing from a genius to poetry, and they are all I can think of: the agreeable power of self-amusement when a man is idle or alone; the privilege of being admitted into the best company; the freedom of saying as many careless things as other people, without being so severely remarked upon.” Alexander Pope found yet another advantage which he does not enumerate, the acquisition of fame, which was the ruling passion of his life.

His education was of the most desultory description. His school-days were of short duration on account of his physical delicacy, but he was an insatiable reader, and especially of the English, French, Italian, Latin and Greek poets. “I followed,” he says, “everywhere my fancy led me, and was like a boy gathering flowers in the woods and fields just as they fell in his way.” He began to write poetry very early:

“As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.”

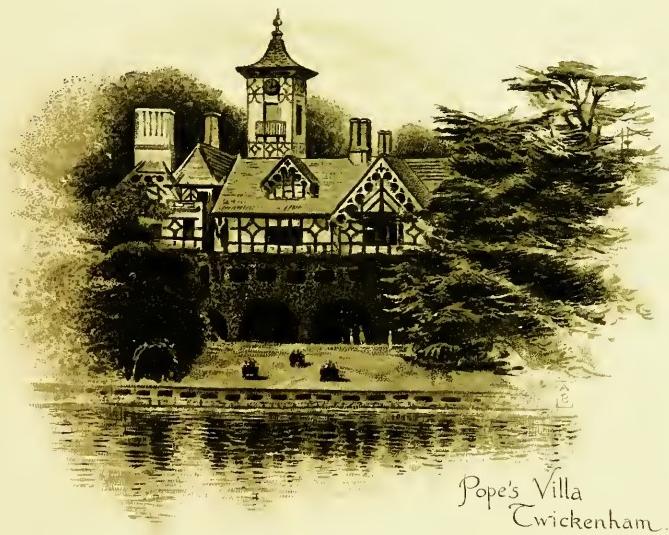
The genius of the little Englishman revealed itself in the Ode to Windsor, part of which was composed when he was sixteen, and in which Diana is described as having

“Cynthus’ top forsook for Windsor shade,”

and where every glade and alley of the English wood is over-run with Greek Nymphs and Gods.

A nostalgia for the intellectual life of the metropolis, drew Pope, in early manhood, to London. When he was twelve, a friend had once taken him to Wills’ coffee-house, and he had there seen Dryden, his master in

the metrical art, presiding over the assembled wits of the day, all drinking punch and smoking big clay pipes. Now, Dryden was dead, and the glory of Wills' coffee-room had set. Addison reigned over a senate of wits at Buttons' coffee-house, at a stone's throw from Covent Garden. Pope was



early admitted into the circle; but ere long we find the sensitive, irritable little man engaged in quarrels with the master and disciples. When his translation of the "Illiad" first appeared, the diminutive deformed poet was courted by the leading members of the fashionable world, by publishers and critics, and the self-taught cripple became the dread of his enemies, and the leading literary man of his day.

Life in London proved too exciting an ordeal for the poet's "tender, crazy little carcase." In 1715, he therefore bade the "dear, droll, distracting town farewell," and settled in Twickenham.

He was comparatively rich; by his translation of Homer, alone, he made £9,000. The embellishing of his cottage and grounds, sufficed to fill his days, together with the writing of poetry, which was "my only profession, and idleness my only pleasure."

Pope's quaint little drawings of ground plans, of porticoes, of columns, arches, etc., may be seen in the British Museum; they are scribbled, for the most part, on backs of letters. His cottage and everything about it delighted him; the Thames washed the edge of the lawn—

"No seas so rich, so gay no banks appear,
No lake so gentle and no springs so clear."

His garden measured about five acres, and was enclosed by three lanes. Pope, Horace Walpole tells us "twisted, twirled, rhymed and harmonised this bit of ground till it appeared two or three sweet little lawns opening on one another, and the whole surrounded by impenetrable woods." The "impenetrable woods" were a plantation at the back of the house on the other side of the road, which cut the poet's property in two. To unite "his wilderness" to his lawns the poet built his underground grotto. The building of this famous "shadowy cave" was his hobby. His friends indulged him in it, and sent for its adornment pieces of spar, coral, crystals, humming-birds' nests. Pope has commemorated this grotto in verse and prose. It is "a temple wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner." The shells are interspersed with "looking-glasses in regular form," and one of these in the shape of a star, adorns the ceiling. When the alabaster lamp is lit the cave glistens as "with lingering drops."

"There my retreat the best companions grace,
Chiefs out of war and statesmen out of place."

Then came Bolingbroke, proud of his thirty years' friendship with the poet; also Lord Peterborough, the amazing soldier who boasted he had seen more kings and postillions than any man in Europe. Bathurst who had a craze for landscape gardening, and came down to discuss his hobby with Pope, and fat, genial Gay wrote a special poem to celebrate the completion of the grotto. Swift, too, made a short stay at the cottage, and departed, vowing that the house was too small to accommodate two valetudinarians. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whom Pope began by flattering outrageously and ended by loathing, was numbered among his guests. A host of wits, poets, statesmen, fair ladies, a crowd of candidates for fame, all eager for Pope's approval, wended their way to the cottage, of which not a stone now remains. Only the grotto survives. In its cool shade we may pause a moment and picture the friends who there sat watching on a Summer day "the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing as through a perspective glass." In the shadowy crowd we discern two women's figures, Maria Blunt, the woman he loved best after his mother, and that simple, homely mother, whose letters the poet treasures, whose dead face appears to him like that of a saint. It is pleasant to think of Pope at Twickenham, driving up to London, from time to time, in his coach, a "Homer in a nutshell," as Atterby called him; or rowed down the river by the waterman whose constant service rendered him a member of the establishment. "Paper sparing Pope," as Swift ironically dubbed him, because of his habit of scribbling down every fleeting thought on scraps of paper, sums up his whole life in the line he wrote of himself "The life of a wit is a warfare upon earth."

Pope died in his cottage at Twickenham, May, 1744, and lies buried in Twickenham Church, by the side of his parents.

COWPER.

OLNEY, in North Bucks, with its adjacent flats, is not noted for picturesque beauty; but it was here that an eminent English poet found such peace as he was destined to enjoy. It was but the peace of an Orestes pursued by the Furies, an interval of calm between the dire torments of a mental disorder, but perhaps all the more precious and all the more beautiful on that account. For it was at Olney that Cowper first came regularly under the care of the Unwins, and while that care lasted he always had a solace, and a refuge against the clouds of mental darkness which threatened to overwhelm him. Without someone to guide and care for him this, in a very literal sense, "child" of genius could not have steered his way through the rough world. He was constitutionally insane. It is absurd to attribute his malady to a mere disappointment in love. It was an inherited tendency, and it required but the slightest shock to his exquisitely refined susceptibilities for its rapid development. Sensibility, which is a grace in others, was in him a disease. As a young man, he became insane with terror at the prospect of receiving a good appointment on the Parliamentary establishment of the House of Lords. The dread of a short oral examination by members of the House unsettled his mind. He tried to hang himself at his chambers in the Temple, where he was at that time studying for the bar. That desperate attempt conclusively proved to his friends his inability to pursue any public vocation. He was well-connected, the son of a clergyman, the great nephew of an earl, and at the time of his birth in 1731, interest was the great passport to success in all the professions, and in this particular he would have encountered no difficulties. It came to be understood in his family that he was to be watched over; but a visit to Huntingdon led to his acquaintance with the Unwins, and his final adoption into their

household. The mode of life in the Unwin household was eminently suited to his spirit, deeply tinged as this was with religious melancholy. "We breakfast commonly between eight and nine," he writes in 1766: "till eleven, we read, either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful teacher of these holy mysteries; at eleven, we attend Divine service, which is performed here once a day, and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please." The nature of the social relaxations may be inferred from his well-known lines:

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

What a picture of quiet contentment! Yet beneath the peace and quiet of his outward life lies the haunting terror ever present with him, that he is doomed to eternal damnation.

After the death of Mr. Unwin by a fall from his horse, the widow removed to Olney, and as the unhappy man of genius could not possibly exist without her, Cowper accompanied her. Southeby describes Olney as the most northerly town in Buckinghamshire, consisting of one long street, with the houses built of stone, but thatched; and with a great church remarkable for its lofty spire. At Olney, the course of the Ouse becomes so winding that the distance thence to St. Neots, which is



about twenty miles by land, is about seventy by the stream. Here Cowper met the fatalistic Mr. Newton, a clergyman of the most pronounced Calvinistic views, who, in spite of his genuine friendly feeling to the poet, rendered his depression the gloomier by suggesting that he was possibly shut out from all hope of the Divine mercy. Cowper acquired a certain resignation of despair by constantly dwelling on the thought, but at times it quite unsettled his reason. While Mrs. Unwin was with him, however, her exquisitely tender ministrations partially banished the haunting spectres from his mind. She taught him to find the purest and the most soothing delights in his garden, his summer-house, and in his tame hares—Puss, Tiney, and Bess—whose characters, as well as habits, he has himself so felicitously described. “Puss,” he says, “would leap into my lap, raise himself up upon his hinder-feet, and bite the hair from my temples. He would suffer me to take him up, and to carry him about in my arms, and has more than once fallen fast asleep upon my knee.” His literary work was, at first, merely the private diversion of an afflicted mind, in its lucid intervals; and though he had written much, he published little before his fiftieth year. He was encouraged to publish, as he had been encouraged to write, by his faithful mentor Mrs. Unwin, and he suddenly realised that he had become the most famous poet of his time. The recluse in his garden was soon the chief literary figure in England; his summer-house was the British temple of the Muse. “He calls it his boudoir,” says Lady Hesketh, in one of her lively letters to her sister Theodora, Cowper’s boyhood’s love. “It has a door and a window, just holds a small table with a desk and two chairs, but though there are two chairs, and two persons might be contained therein, it would be with a degree of difficulty. For this cause, as I make a point of not disturbing a poet in his retreat, I go not there.” “The Task” is a notable poem, though it is too didactic for the taste of the present day. Like all his works, it was directly inspired by feminine counsel, but in this instance not that of Mrs. Unwin. It was Lady Austen who

suggested to him his theme. He is eminently the poet of the home, and of all its associations. When he was not writing poems full of moral maxims and good advice, or some of the most beautiful hymns in our language, he was turning an ode on



Olney
Church.

"An Inkstand Dried in the Sun," on "The Death of Mrs. Throckmorton's Bullfinch," or on "The Feather Hangings of Mrs. Montagu." It is impossible to think of him without recalling to mind the gentle lady—whose death he survived but two or three years—his garden, his summer-house, and Olney Church. The hills of Surrey, as the nearest approach to mountains he had ever seen, frightened him. He longed for the plain with its placid beauties, for the gentle, but tortuous river, which was, in some sense, the image of his uneventful, yet troubled life. He wrote of himself:—



Summer-house
in
Cowper's
Garden.

"I was the stricken deer, that left the herd,
Long since."

"Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of a life to come."

G R A Y.

THE thought of Gray is closely associated with that of Burnham Beeches, which the gentle poet may be said to have discovered.

During a college vacation, Gray visited an uncle at Burnham, in the neighbourhood of Stoke-Pogis. The old gentleman had been a famous hunter in his day, but, owing to the gout, was at this time, reduced to a state of grumbling inactivity. He held his delicate, dreamy nephew in contempt for preferring walking to riding, and reading to hunting. The ex-sportsman's dogs sat on all the chairs in the house, and completely ousted the poet. In self-defence, one day, Gray wandered off in search of some quiet spot, where he could absorb himself in a favourite book unmolested. He came upon a beautiful glade, "a vale and hill covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the wind." There he read Virgil by the hour; and the hares and squirrels played about him in his retreat as they played about Adam in Paradise. Thus he writes to Horace Walpole, his brilliant college chum, who had taken an immense fancy to Gray from the moment they met when small boys at Eton. An avenue of lime trees in the college grounds called the "Poets' Walk," is dedicated to Gray, and his friend who, it is said, often paced up and down it together. Walpole has told us that they were not athletes, that they "never made an expedition against bargemen, or won a match at cricket;" nevertheless, in the famous "Ode to Eton," the poet paints a robust and healthy boyhood:

"Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race,
Disporting on thy margent green,
The paths of pleasure trace;

Who foremost now, delight to cleave
With pliant arm, thy glassy wave?
The captive linnet which enthrall?
What idle progeny succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed
Or urge the flying ball?"

When his student days were over, he and Horace Walpole made an interesting tour in France and Italy. Unfortunately the friends quarrelled, and Gray returned to England alone. It is said that since Milton, no such accomplished English traveller had visited those classic shores. Gray reached London in time to see his father die: the elder Gray had been a squanderer, a bad husband, a careless father. Mrs. Gray had procured the money for her son's education, by carrying on a business, in partnership, with her sister. After the death of his father, Gray, who was devotedly attached to his mother, took her down to the sylvan village of Stoke-Pogis, in Bucks, and there established her and her two sisters in a comfortable home. West End House—where the three ladies lived

to the end of their days, and to which the poet paid constant visits—was situated at the end of the lane leading to Stoke Common. It was a simple farmstead, two stories high, with a porch over the front door opening out into a garden stocked with flowers. There we picture our poet

"Brushing with hasty steps
the dew away
To meet the sun upon the
upland lawn,"



or loitering in the rising field behind the house—crowned by a height on which a summer-house still stands—and observing the habits of the birds and flowers; noting down as was his wont, such delicately thrilling announcements as the arrival of the first white butterfly, the first song of the lark, and the first blossom on the almond-tree. There he wrote “The Ode to Eton College,” and there, seven years after its commencement, he finished the immortal “Elegy in a Country Churchyard.” The ivy-covered church, with the tombstones gathered round it, the simple, peaceful scenes in the gathering twilight, inspired that exquisite poem, one of the most perfect in our language, whose popularity no changes of taste or fashion have diminished. General Wolff, as he rowed up to Quebec on the eve of his death is said to have repeated those sweet and solemn words. Gray lived the life of a recluse and student in College Chambers, of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, but every vacation he came down to the quiet house, in the peaceful tree-embowered country town. We can picture the gentle poet, made much of by the three old ladies who loved and were proud of him; and with good reason, for Gray was considered in his own day to be “Perhaps the most learned man in Europe.” The great people of Stoke Manor House also courted the poet. These ladies had discovered that at West End House there “lurked a wicked imp they call a poet,” and vowed they must make his acquaintance. One day they arrived, and finding him out, left a mysterious message, requesting his presence at Stoke House. Gray and his hostesses soon became warm friends. There are traces of a long flirtation between the middle-aged poet and the heiress; in his note-book appears delightful jottings concerning the stately gardens at Stoke, with its old-fashioned flowers, and south wall covered with clusters of fruit.

After Mrs. Gray’s death, and that of the two old aunts, West End House was shut up and Gray betook himself to London. The British Museum was thrown open for the first time to the public on the 15th of January, 1759, and Gray was among the visitors that day. He had

settled down in Southampton Row, to be near the shrine of learning. In one of his delightful letters we have a picture of the Bloomsbury of those days. "Here is air, sunshine, and quiet to comfort you," he writes.

On the death of Cibber, Gray was offered the laureateship, but declined it. In 1768, "the gentleman who sometimes writes for his amusement,"



was elected Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, where he lived the life of a recluse, in quaintly decorated chambers in Pembroke Hall, until his death on the 22nd July, 1772. He was buried at Stoke Pogis by the side of his mother, and in the adjacent Park, a monument has been erected to his memory.

BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS is the lyric poet of joy, of love, of nature. Born in days of decorous ideals, ever chasing the fleeting phantoms of delight, and dying in the ardour of his vain quest, Burns reminds us of those mythical Greek figures, half-animal, half-god, those fabled Centaurs and Fauns, with their exuberant delight in physical life, their gift of music and wise speech. It is easy to understand Burns' impatience of restraint, his imperious demand for enjoyment at any price, his sympathy with the drunken Tam O'Shanter's triumphant mood of mind,

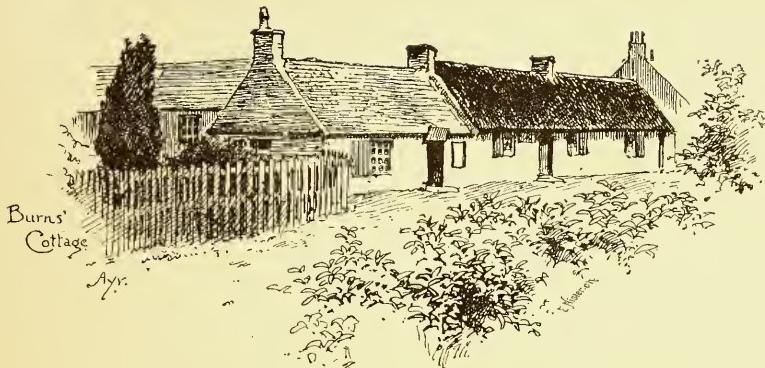
“ Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er the ills of life victorious—”

when we think of the hardships and privations of his youth, which he describes as “this kind of life, the cheerless gloom of a hermit, the unceasing gloom of a galley slave.

He was a perfect Don Juan in his susceptibility to the charms of the “Lassies O!” the rustic Jeans, Nannies, and Marys.

He had a manly sympathy with the weak, tenderness for all dumb creatures. Saint Francis could not have worded a gentler address to the frightened mouse—

“ Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie.
I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow mortal—”



which he had crushed with his plough, or uttered more pitying words to the wounded hare; or spoken more touchingly to the

“Wee, modest crimson-tipped flower.”

His love of country, his ambitious independent spirit, his pride in the exploits of Wallace, make him the representative of Scottish genius. It was his desire

“That I, for poor auld Scotland’s sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a song at least.”

He has touched with sweetness and glory the hills, the rivers, the braes of his dear native region, Ayrshire. Born on the banks of his “Bonnie Doon,” in an “auld clay biggin,” built by his father, the poet was familiar since early childhood with “Alloway Kirk,” the haunted burying ground which was the scene of “Tam’s” adventure. Distressing poverty surrounded his early years; a poverty that was ennobled by the father’s heroic struggle against adversity, his paternal solicitude for his children’s education, his patriarchal piety, all of which the son commemorated in “The Cotter’s Saturday night.”

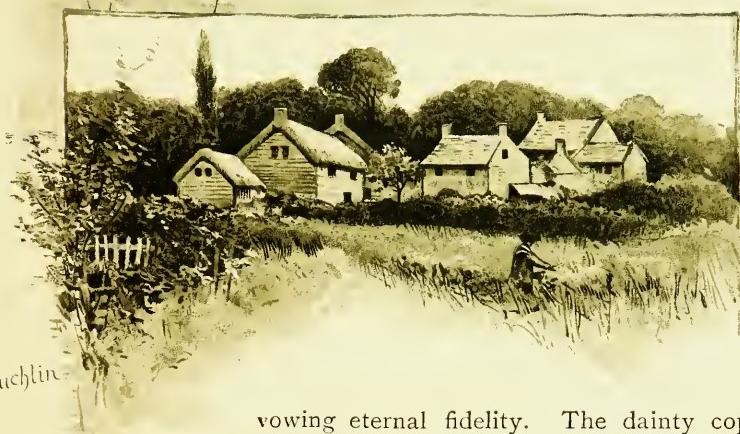
Burns was fifteen when "a bonnie, sweet sonsie lass," a year younger than himself, his partner in the labours of the harvest field inspired him to write. His first song was adapted to the melody of her favourite reel. From that time the lad was always in love, or the confidant of other love-smitten swains. The lassies, Wallace, and Nature, inspired his songs.

When Burns settled near Mauchline he was head of the family. His ambition to distinguish himself was not confined to literature, he was proud of his personal appearance and his conversational powers. He was the only man in the parish who wore his hair tied up; his gaudy red and white check plaid was draped in a peculiar way.

With his fine dark eyes, the finest Sir Walter Scott had ever seen in any man's head, his gift of winning words in speech and song, Burns was a brilliant personality. One evening, when, with his little dog following at his heels as he danced, he assisted at a penny ball given by the young men and women of Mauchline, he expressed a loud wish "that he could get any of the lasses to like him as well as his dog." A few days later the dog, the four-footed "*Deus ex machinæ*" in this unhappy affair, ran over some linen a young girl was bleaching on Mauchline Green. The girl was Jean Armour, who laughingly inquired of the poet if he had found a lassie to love him as well as did his dog. Burns was not long in replying:—

"Though mountains rise, and deserts howl,
And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
I still would love my Jean."

Shortly after, when Mauchline village was ablaze with indignation, when the Kirk authorities invited the dark-eyed Don Juan to come and sit on the stool of repentance; when the door of Jean's home was shut upon him, we find our poet standing upon one of the banks of Ayr, with Highland Mary on the other, holding a Bible between them, and



Mauchlin



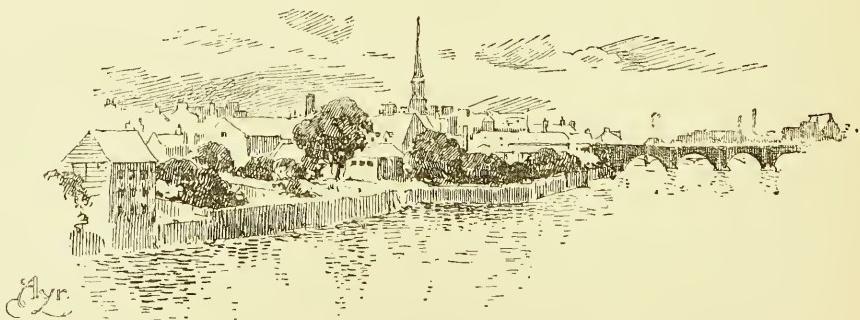
Brig o' Doon

vowing eternal fidelity. The dainty copy of the Scriptures in two volumes, presented by Burns to his new love on this occasion, is preserved in the Burns' Monument at Alloway, near Ayr. On the fly-leaf are inscribed texts, as to the binding nature of an oath. The betrothed couple parted, and Mary went to visit her family in the Highlands before joining Burns as his wife. She never returned; death took her from the poet, who years afterwards wrote the well-known poem, "To Mary in Heaven."

“ That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love?”

In Edinburgh, where, shortly after, we find Burns, all society goes mad in its reception of the “ploughman-poet.” The “Duchess of Gordon and all the gay world” made him welcome. When society grew weary of the lion of the season, Burns returned to Mauchline, married Jean Armour, his old love, and settled down on a farm—Ellisland—close to Dumfries. In the beautiful grounds of “Friar’s Carse,” “Tam O’Shanter” was written, in a single day. Burns composed it, as he walked up and down his favourite path at Nithside.

As a means of adding to his livelihood, Burns accepted the post of exciseman, offered to him by Government, and fulfilled its distasteful duties with energy, if not always with tact. Thereupon he gave up Ellisland, and settled in Dumfries, on his salary of £70 a year. There is no sadder story than that of the close of Burns’ life. Out of the darkness float songs of ineffable sweetness, the strains of “Auld Lang Syne,” of “Wandering Willie,” and of “Highland Mary.” In his 37th year, on July 21st, 1796, death came as a deliverer to him. He was buried with pomp and much mourning in Dumfries Kirk-yard.



WORDSWORTH.

THE plainest of plain men, gifted with genius, a peasant with the insight of a God; thus Wordsworth appears to us. He did not idealize, in the ordinary sense of the word: he saw too straight for that, but he saw the folk around him, as their Maker might see them. He saw through their common exterior to the soul within them, and the poor, the prosaic, the disgraced, became heroic and pathetic. Lucy Gray, Peter Bell, Widow Blake, might seem to most of us unworthy of notice, to Wordsworth, they are as notable as the gifted and high-born. He has been called, or rather miscalled, the chief of the Lake Poets. Had he been placed in the Tropics, he would have described the pine forests with the same exquisiteness of detail and grandeur of general effect as he has written of his native country; he would have interpreted the dwellers there, with the same spiritual recognition of the dignity or ignominy of their lot. It was this sense of the sacredness of all human beings, that made him espouse so passionately the cause of the French Revolution. When the plain man in Wordsworth is in the ascendant, he becomes tedious, for his strength and his weakness lie in this union of supreme insight with the bald simplicity of a peasant.

It is a common error to regard Wordsworth as a prosaic rhymer, who occasionally rises to the heights of great poetry, and indeed one is led to this conclusion by whole desert tracts of his verse varied but by the slightest oasis of beauty. And one feels annoyed that he should have written so much that is worthless, but when one finds from his own confession, that his baldness of language, his dullness of description are intentional, the whole of his work assumes a different aspect.

Wordsworth was consciously, and of set purpose, leading a revolution against the ornate artificial-flowery style of the eighteenth century poets—a revolution in which Burns unconsciously bore his part, and of which our Tennyson is the eldest born son—and in this effort Wordsworth fought against his own soul's impulses—as much pains was taken to avoid poetic diction as other men take to produce it—and thus he sacrificed his poetry to his idea, and produced a thousand bald lines for one gem, such as the poems to Lucy, but *he did what he meant to do*, and how many of us can say as much?

The tawdry sentiment of the powder-puff and patch-box poets of the eighteenth century is a thing of the past, and it is to Wordsworth and Burns that we owe its extinction. It is in his poems to Lucy and his sonnets that Wordsworth is at his greatest, that he rises above criticism, “into the Heaven where the immortals sit.”

Youth rarely loves Wordsworth—he has none of the glow and glitter that catch “sweet and twenty”—Twenty often prefers the ball-room to a hill-side—and Byron to Wordsworth—but as we grow older, we love more and more, the elm-trees and meadows, the moorlands and the fens, the sunset lights, the dews of dawn awake new and more intense delight, and Wordsworth’s poetry grows to be “as a beloved hand laid cool upon our forehead when it burns of some wild fever.”

Every part of the Lake country is sanctified by his genius. He has breathed a soul into its hills, its dales, its tarns. About Grasmere and Rydal, however, cluster the most intimate associations with his life. Born at Cockermouth, on the outskirts of that beautiful region, the poet’s childish recollections were of Derwent Water and of Skiddaw, which caught the sunset glory as it reared its head against the eastern sky. He went to school at Hawkshead, “the beloved vale,” near Esthwaite Water, and there with the spirits of a healthy ten-year-old boy joined in the sports of his comrades. But even at this early age he held “unconscious intercourse with beauty, old as creation.” To the age of fourteen Wordsworth dates

his "consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poet of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them. I made a resolution to supply in some degree this deficiency."



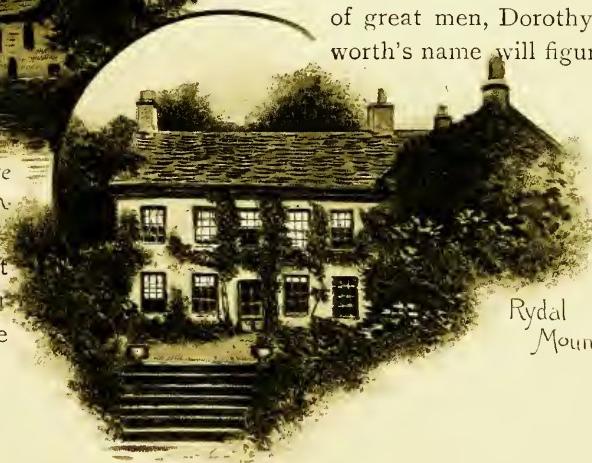
Rydal
Water.

In the "Prelude," we follow the history of the outward and spiritual events of his life, until the time when, disappointed with the results of the French Revolution, he returns to Grasmere with his sister Dorothy. If ever there comes to be written the history of the worthy sisters of great men, Dorothy Wordsworth's name will figure in the



Grasmere
Church.

first rank, beside that of Herschell's sister and of Eugenie de Guerin.



Rydal
Mount.

To Wordsworth

“Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang,
The thought of her was like a flash of light,
Or an unseen companionship, a breath
Of fragrance independent of the wind.”

The house where the brother and sister spent frugal days, was covered with roses and honeysuckles. It had a bit of orchard and a garden. They boated together, took long excursions together, read together. Both had a passionate love of nature. Dorothy kept a diary, and in it she noted down simple stories of country folk; some of the delicate effects of nature that she saw and recorded furnished themes for her brother's poems. On an expedition to Ullswater, as they approach the lake, she describes how they came upon daffodils close to the water's edge. “I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them; some rested their heads on the stones as on a pillow; the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily danced with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing.” These were the daffodils of which the poet sang,

“I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high, o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.”

After her brother's marriage Dorothy continued to be an inmate of his house. The road from Grasmere to Keswick, where Southeby and Coleridge lived, and that over Kirkstone to Ullswater, are peopled with memories of the Wordsworths of Thirlmere. The fair lake which the Corporation of Manchester has turned into a reservoir was the trysting place of the poets, and the rock, on which the friends and Dorothy Wordsworth carved their initials, is now doubtless submerged.

When Wordsworth was appointed to the Distributorship of stamps for Westmoreland and Cumberland, the family removed to Rydal Mount. The white house stands in “a sea of foliage” some yards from the road.



A flight of steps leads to the entrance. In Wordsworth's time, the rooms on the ground floor, the dining-room, breakfast-room, and library were simply furnished. The library contained a good collection of standard books, busts of Scott and Wordsworth, and some fine engravings. In the garden was centred the poetry and distinction of the poet's home. There was the larch tree from which for years sang a faithful thrush, and among the

branches of the laburnum tree hung the osier cages of the doves. We can picture the sweet old-fashioned flowers, the grasses and wild plants that grew in the interstices of the stone steps; the terraced walks rising behind the house under the shadow of Nab's Scar's, and from which the eye travelled over a tossing sea of verdure to the gleaming waters of Rydal Lake, with its fairy islands. As with most poets, Wordsworth's study was in the open air. "Here," said a servant to a visitor who asked to see her master's study, "is his library, but his study is out of doors." The country folk watched with affectionate interest the gaunt figure of the poet wrapped in a plaid, and wearing a pair of green glasses to protect his delicate eyes, and a large hat, as he went murmuring aloud—"boooing about" as they called it, and—

"Scattered to the winds
The vocal raptures of fresh poetry."

The road between Rydal and Grasmere speaks to us of the poet. Here one evening, as the glow-worms were all alight in dusky nooks, he thought of "The Pilgrim's Dream;" there he saw that monument of ice on a Winter day, "like marble, white, like ether pure." It was at Rydal Mount

that he wrote of that sunset where the mountains and the glowing mists formed a kind of Jacob's ladder. The rocks, the flowers, are all glorified by the touch of his passionate sympathy; nature is still but the background upon which are drawn the pathetic and heroic figures of the dalesmen and women, whose simple souls he understood, revered, and interpreted.

Wordsworth, "sole king of rocky Cumberland," died at Rydal Mount in April, 1850, as the cuckoo-clock, the sound of which had often beguiled him to feel as in a world where nothing can go wrong, struck noon. He was buried at Grasmere, according to his wish, close to the church where he was married, and near the children and sister who had preceded him. He had won the desire of his youth, to be numbered among

"The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays."



BYRON.

*N*O one can study the life of Byron without feeling a burning indignation against his mother, who, undoubtedly, by her treatment of him, italicised the faults, and half obliterated the qualities of his nature. Unreasonable indulgence, equally unreasonable punishment, a constant change of tutors and of studies, and a ceaseless system of worry, had the worst possible influence on Byron's character. That a different up-bringing would have produced a different result is seen from the fact that at Dr. Glennie's school at Dulwich, away from his mother's influence, he showed a marked improvement in temper and industry.

To the student of human nature, the days of childhood, and of school life of a boy, are the epitome of the future man. This is notably the case with Lord Byron, "the wild northern colt" as his school fellows called him. The whole contradictory tendencies of his manhood's care were foreshadowed in his life at Harrow. The lad we meet there, is father to the man who died at Missolonghi, for the independence of Greece. He is the Byron in embryo, whose verse was to be the awakener of the English conscience against oppression. At Harrow, we find foreshadowed in him the poet of burning thoughts and words; one also who knew how to launch the epigram of heroic emotion. The note of rebellion, which was so characteristic of Byron's genius, rang through his school career. On the occasion of a school revolt when the rebels proposed to burn down the class-room, Byron, though usually the ring-leader, opposed the scheme, and averted its execution by pointing to the names of their fathers carved on the walls and desks. We recognise in the passionate hatred of oppression that inspired him at school to

protect the weak against the strong, the precursor of the man, who saw the inner meaning of the French Revolution, and denounced the Holy Alliance in its endeavour to repress the impulse of nations to win their liberty. It is fascinating to see the aristocrat sighing for the freedom of the human race; and in those fagging scenes at Harrow when Byron appeared as the protector of the feeble to those he rescued, he appeared as of a nature superior to their own, as a god helping mortals, but always as a helper. The magnanimity with which, as a child, he held out his arm to receive half the lashes a bully, too big for him to fight, was inflicting upon another child, was prompted by the same spirit which sent him to suffer for Greece.

He retained the fondest recollections of Harrow:—

“Ye scenes of my childhood, whose loved recollection
Embitters the present, compared with the past;
Where science first dawned on the powers of reflection,
And friendships were formed, too romantic to last.”

He overcame the disadvantages of his lameness. He was leader in “cricket’s manly toil,” in swimming, boxing, riding. He rebelled against routine in study; performed occasional prodigies of intellectual activity, and then relapsed into idleness. “He always,” says a friend, “preferred hockey to Horace, relinquished even Helicon for duck-pond, and gave up the best poet who ever wrote hard Latin for a game of cricket on the common.” His passionate friendships are memorable, and he was loyal to them through life—

“If chance some well-remembered face,
Some old companion of my early race
Advance to claim his friend with honest joy,
My eyes, my heart, proclaimed me yet a boy:
The glittering scene, the fluttering groups around,
Were all forgotten, when my friend was found!”

When Byron was at Harrow, he fell in love with Miss Chaworth—



In the
School-room
Harrow.

the Mary of his poems. In after life, looking upon this one pure passion, he fancied that if Mary Chaworth had returned his love, it would have been his salvation. The melancholy and moodiness that grew upon him in his manhood, seem to have cast their shadow over him in those school days. A gravestone in the churchyard on the hill is still called "Byron's Tomb." There the future poet would sit for hours in dreamy abstraction.

On leaving Cambridge, Byron, at nineteen, took up his residence, for a time, at Newstead Abbey, the home of his ancestors. But he was possessed by that eternal unrest, which is so

often a part of the poets' nature. He travelled abroad for two years, and then returned to Newstead; he was profoundly lonely and wretched; his marriage proved unhappy. He plunged into politics as a distraction, until after the publication of "Childe Harold," when "I awoke one



Harrow
on-the-Hill.

morning and found myself famous.' Then he realized "that, Society, as now constituted, is *fatal* to all great original undertakings," and he quitted his native country for ever. He lived in Italy, where he became acquainted with many of the eminent folk of his time, wrote his immortal works, and, finally, threw himself with ardour into the War of Independence in Greece. At his death, Stanhope wrote of him: "England has lost her brightest genius—Greece her noblest friend." The cities of Greece contended for the honour of giving him a grave. Athens wished him to be interred in the Temple of Theseus. His popularity in England had by this time waned, and his country refused him a place in Westminster Abbey; and he was buried in the quiet little village-church of Hucknall. His most enduring monument is the panel in the school-room at Harrow, on which his name is carved.



LONGFELLOW.

“*T*HE Forest City,” as Portland in the State of Maine is called, was the native town of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. At the beginning of the century it well deserved the sylvan title it bore. Built under the shadow of a primeval forest, its houses, stores, and churches of timber, its streets shaded by patriarchal trees, the hills surrounding it clothed with verdure, it had an idyllic charm. Situated on the sea, there were added to the town’s pastoral sweetness associations of war and of adventure. A naval combat was fought within sight of Portland, when Longfellow was a small child; and often there would come into the harbour some great ship, laden with merchandise from a distant land. Memories of his native city always exercised a fascination over the poet whose genius is idyllic and chivalric.

“ Often I think of the beautiful town
That is seated by the sea;
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me.

* * * *

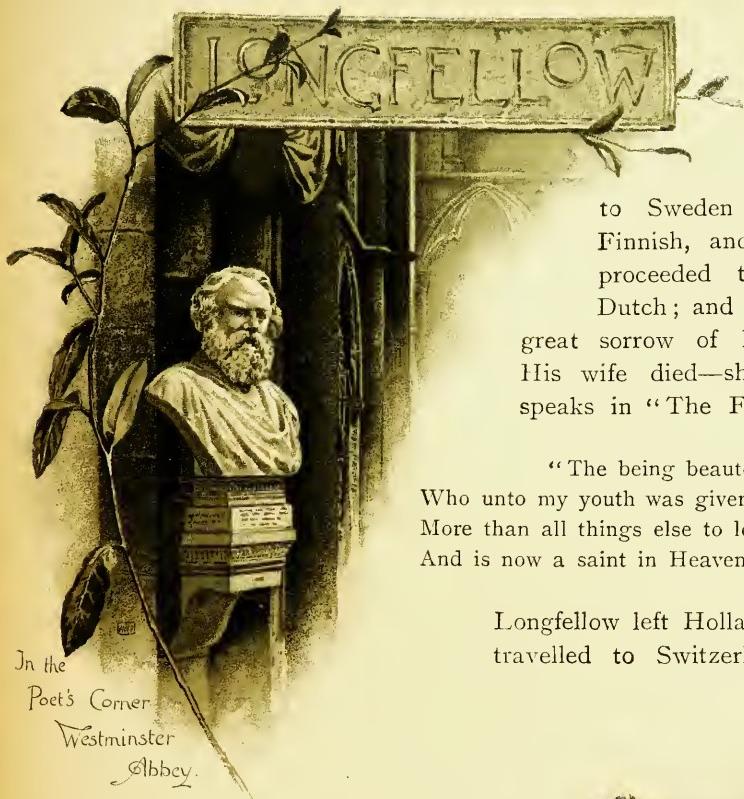
“ I remember the black wharves and the slips,
And the sea-tides, tossing free;
And Spanish sailors, with bearded lips,
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,
And the magic of the sea.”

The boy loved poetry, romance, and music. To the end of his life he remembered his mother playing the harpsichord of an evening; and the mention of certain stories or poems seemed to bring back snatches of

the old melodies, to which, as a child, he had listened as she read. He loved his mother tenderly ; and, as he trudged by her side to the Unitarian Chapel, he proudly carried her footstool in winter, her posy in summer. At fifteen the future poet had acquired all the learning the academy of Portland could bestow upon him, and was sent to Bowdoin College, the Alma Mater of the State of Maine. There he acquitted himself with honour, and gave evidence of a native gift of language by the brilliancy of his translations. The College authorities offered to keep open for him the post of Professor of Foreign Languages should he feel inclined to fit himself for the discharge of its duties. After he had taken his degree, Longfellow set sail for Europe, and travelled through France, Spain, Italy, and part of Germany ; in each country he learned the language, studied its literature, and gathered a store of memories that became the inspiration of his poetry.

When he returned to Bowdoin, some two years later, he was an accomplished linguist. Appointed to the Chair of Foreign Languages he settled down close to the College, and at the age of twenty-two, he was the youngest and the most popular of professors. He rose at six, he went to bed at midnight, he taught French, Italian, Spanish, and lectured on their literatures ; he wrote grammars, and compiled speakers. In 1832 he married the daughter of one of his father's neighbours at Portland, who had been the love of his boyhood. The fame of the young professor spread, and two years later the University of Harvard sought him out, and offered to him the Chair of Modern Languages left vacant by the resignation of Mr. Ticknor. The offer was accompanied by a leave of absence to enable him to travel in Europe for a year.

Longfellow had already appeared as a poet before the world ; as a poet he was received in London, and welcomed in the best literary society. He met Carlyle, and took tea with the Sage of Chelsea and his wife, in their house in Cheyne Row. His object in coming to Europe had been to study the Scandinavian tongues and literatures. He went



to Sweden and learnt Swedish, Finnish, and Danish. He next proceeded to Holland to master Dutch; and at Rotterdam the first great sorrow of his lifetime occurred. His wife died—she it is of whom he speaks in “The Footsteps of Angels.”

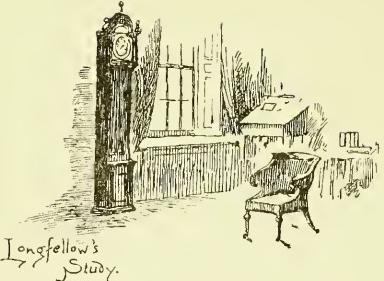
“The being beauteous,
Who unto my youth was given,
More than all things else to love me—
And is now a saint in Heaven.”

Longfellow left Holland broken-hearted and travelled to Switzerland. At Interlacken,

he met his college friend, Mr. Appleton, who was taking a driving tour through Switzerland with his father and sister. They offered to the young widower the vacant seat in their carriage. He accepted it and sat opposite the lady, whose



Longfellow's
Home



Longfellow's
Study.

beauty, grace and angelic smile he has celebrated as attributes of Mary Ashburton, the heroine of "Hyperion." Hers "were the deep unutterable eyes, with down-falling eyelids full of dreams and slumber." The poet and the lady parted as friends; some years later Miss Appleton became his wife.

During this interval Longfellow's name had taken rank as that of the first living American poet. His was a brilliant personality; he became one of the lights of the intellectual circles in Boston; he was moreover the glass of fashion to the youth of the period. Singularly handsome, and an exquisite by nature, the poet-professor was the best dressed man of those parts. His waistcoats, his walking-sticks, the shade of his gloves were carefully copied, just as his lectures were attended by crowded audiences and his poems were read, by all America.

When Longfellow married Miss Appleton, the bride's father gave as a wedding gift to the young couple Craigie House and estate. The mansion had belonged to General Washington, and there is a fitness in the thought of Longfellow, the poet of the affections, and the singer of his country's romantic annals, inhabiting the home of the founder of American Independence. The poet's love of beauty was apparent in the adornment of the house. The poet's writing-table was placed in the room where Washington had worked among his charts and memorials of his campaigns. The golden brown of the curtains, repeated in the furniture, gave a subdued richness to the background. Faded portraits of the great soldier and his wife hung among pastel portraits of Longfellow's chosen friends—Emerson, Hawthorne, Charles Felton, Sumner. A bust in marble of the historian, G. W. Green, occupied a conspicuous place. The walls were lined with bookcases filled with rare editions—finely-bound books and

presentation copies. The room was always full of the scent of flowers; an orange tree stood in one of the windows; in the other a high desk.

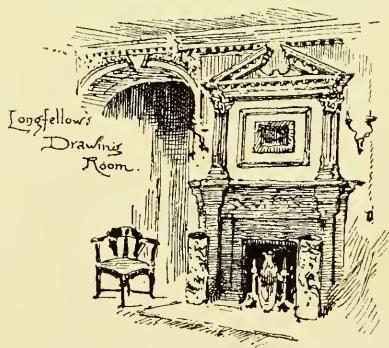
Every room of the mansion contained valuable and curios or beautiful objects. It was a museum stored with relics of travels in foreign lands, with works of art and curios. The drawing-room, where, in the old days, Mrs. Washington and the General had held their simple court, was now a splendid apartment where stores of art were accumulated, and which also was sweet with tokens of home life. On the first landing of the staircase leading to the upper rooms, stood a magnificently carved Dutch clock with chimes telling the hour—

“ Half-way up the stairs it stands,
It points and beckons with its hands
From its case of massive oak,
Like a monk, who under his cloak
Crosses himself, and sighs. Alas!
With sorrowful voice, to all who pass—
“ Forever—never!
Never—forever ! ”

In spite of the rare treasures it contained, the latch of the door of Craigie House was left ever open, that all who wished might enter in.

The shadow of death, crossed the threshold of his beautiful home, and this time it came in an appalling form. Mrs. Longfellow was here burnt to death. One evening, as she was playing with her children, the draperies of her light dress caught fire, and she died of the injuries she received.

Some of Longfellow's sweetest poems were written at Nahant—his home by the sea; a green retreat, where the woods grow to the water's edge. His two-storied house,



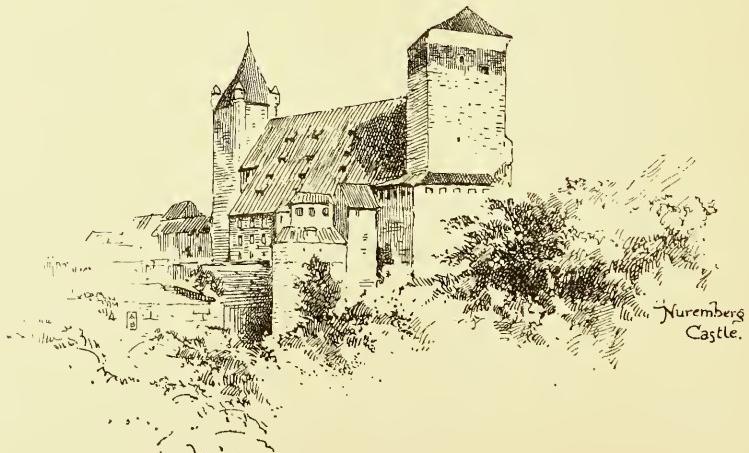
built of wood, was Italian in style, surrounded by a portico supported by pillars; it commanded a noble view of the sea and country. The airy rooms were always full of the perfume of flowers; the furniture was simple, but on the walls hung some fine pictures, and in the poet's study could always be found the newest books, and the oldest classics. Here at sunset, sweeping over the sea came borne on the wind the sound of the bells of Lyn, from the opposite shore:—

“Oh, curfew of the setting sun ! O Bells of Lyn,
Oh requiem of the dying day ! O Bells of Lyn !”

“The Secrets of the Sea” was inspired by the sound of the waves beating against the shore of Nahant.

Longfellow died on March 18th, 1882, in Craigie House—the beautiful home, thronged with heroic memories and poetic visions. The lilacs had not then put out their buds; and the lilac was the poet's favourite spring flower. The year before his death he had made a friend promise to place on his grave a branch of one of the lilac-trees that grow in the garden of Craigie House.

In England, Longfellow's popularity is second only to that which he enjoys in America. His bust is placed in Westminster Abbey among the poets which the nation loves to honour.



CHARLES KINGSLEY.

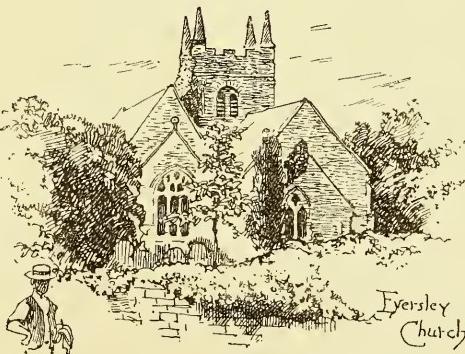
TO many people, Kingsley is only a novelist—a great novelist—whose work is full of virile force, and illuminated not only by flashes of genuine insight and inspiration, but by the steady shining of a high ideal. But he is not only a novelist—he is a poet, and above all, a song-writer. Most of his novels have faults—spots on the sun—but his songs are perfect—“The Sands of Dee,” “Three Fishers,” and “When all the World is Young.” There are no songs like these.

He was born in Devonshire, and, when he was five years' old his father went to live in Lincolnshire. Here Kingsley gathered memories of “shining water, golden reed-beds, countless waterfowl, strange gaudy insects—the wild nature of the deep fens”—memories to be set in his masterpiece “Hereward the Wake.” Then the living of Clovelly was given to Kingsley's father, and the family returned to Devonshire.

For years Charles Kingsley was too poor to marry the woman he loved, but when he was made Rector of Eversley, where he had been curate, he married, and lived at Eversley, till his death.

He was a thorough sportsman, and his religious belief was only stronger than his sporting spirit. It came natural to him to talk at one moment to a man about the points of a horse, and the next about the mercy of God to sinners.

He had a full and sufficing faith, and his last words were—“It is right—all as it should be.”



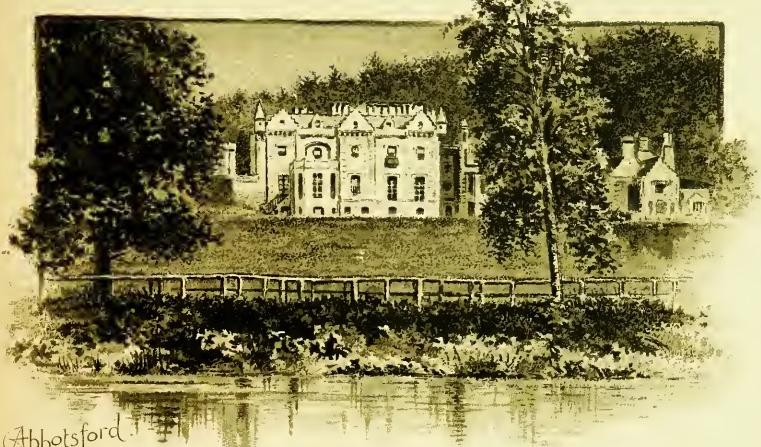
SCOTT.

SIIR WALTER SCOTT, like his great predecessor, Shakespeare, was passionately attached to the district in which his childhood was passed. Though born in Edinburgh, his youth was spent in the wild and romantic Border Country. It was an environment which deeply impressed and influenced the natural bent of his mind, stored with legends and traditions of the Lowlands and of the Highlands. Although he was the re-awakener of romance in fiction—a new force, and an inspiration in the literature of his day, not only in England, but also in France, Germany, and America—he is, nevertheless, in his tastes and ambition, a remarkable survival of the feudal days. The picturesqueness, excitement, and hospitality of the middle-ages, fascinated him; and it was his dream, to resuscitate this pageantry.

The novels in which he has given free play to this strongest impulse of his genius, are acknowledged to be masterpieces of historical portraiture. Love is the great teacher, and no other man has so completely caught the mediæval spirit, because no other man of our century has looked back along the dim vistas of history with so loving an eye.

The inaccuracy of detail, to which even his warmest admirers cannot be blind, does little to mar the beauty of his work. The soul of the thing is right; the man believed in what he wrote, and this is the secret of his power.

In poetry, Scott's greatest triumphs were his ballads. There is not in the English language a more stirring ballad than "Bonnie Dundee," of which, however, few people seem to know more than the few verses usually sung.



(Abbotsford)

Than this verse, no modern ballad offers us anything more fiery:

"There is brass on the target of bark and bull-hide,

There is steel in the scabbard that dangles beside;

And the brass shall be burnished, the steel shall flash free,

At a toss of the bonnet

of Bonnie Dundee!"

He died on
September 31st,
1832.

"I have seen
much, but no-
thing like my ain
house," said Sir
Walter, when he
returned to die at
Abbotsford.



Melrose Abbey

TENNYSON.

THERE is no public man of whom we may say, we know so little and so much, as we do of our Poet Laureate. In these days of interviewers, he has eluded every attempt that has been made to encroach upon his privacy. He remains "the poet hidden in the light of thought," and yet by this light of thought, he is intimately revealed to us. It illuminates his joys and his sorrows, and it brings out with pre-Raphaelite distinctness his haunts and his homes. The exquisitely faithful transcripts of Nature he gives us, conjure up before our mind, not only the outward features of the scene, but also arouses a corresponding sentiment in the imagination.

Mr. Grindon, the President of the Botanical Society, stated in an address which he delivered on "The Flora of Tennyson," that the poet has mentioned some hundred flowers and trees in his works, characterizing each with an accuracy of observation, which gives an almost scientific value to his descriptions, while for poetic purposes he uses each with a delicate apprehension of its peculiarities.

By close and constant communion with Nature, our Poet Laureate has caught the very note of its soul—the gay accent in the babbling rhythm of the brook, which hurries by thirsty hills, singing :

"I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley."

contrasts with the torrent-voice of that other brook he knew so well in his boyhood. " Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,

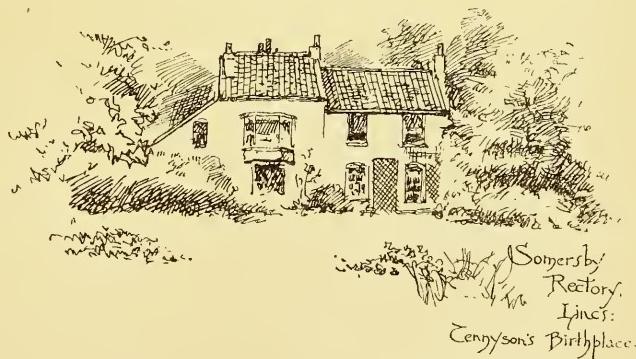
In every elbow and turn
The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland."

Tennyson was born in Somersby Vicarage. His earliest associations are of the fen country, the melancholy and fascination of which he has interpreted for us. He brings magically near the secret spiritual beauty of those wide horizons, "The level waste, the rounding gray," that for leagues are marked by no other tree but a poplar, "all silver-green with gnarled bark;" "The wild waste enormous, where the trenched waters run from sky to sky, emblems of eternity."

The favourite haunt of his boyhood was the "Glen," the wooded ravine from which Somersby brook issues. The pathlessness, the tangled vegetation, the depth of shade, the wind-echoing sonorities of this wild spot, impressed his imagination. In miniature it represented to him the crime and sorrow-haunted corners of the world.

Blocks of sandstone lay at the entrance of this glen. One May morning, 1824, Tennyson, then in his fifteenth year, wrote on one of these rocks "Byron is dead." The news of the death at Missolonghi had just reached the retired Lincolnshire Vicarage, and everything seemed at an end to the boy poet. "I thought nothing else mattered," he said, some time ago to a friend, as he recalled the memories of his youth.

He and his brother Charles were inseparable comrades. They are remembered by the "oldest inhabitant" of Somersby and Louth, where they went to school, as shy youths, who kept very much to themselves; Alfred, especially, was a dreamer. The poet treasures many spirited memories of his boyhood, and remembers encounters with village boys, when he and Charles held the



Somersby brook in mimic warfare against an invading force of rustic lads. Among the poet's favourite trees the poplar takes the first rank. Memories of his childhood cling round

“Poplars four
That stand about my father's door.”

These guarding trees at the rectory gate have disappeared, but still the seven elms and the sycamore are there of which he sings in his “Ode to Memory.” The house is no longer the rectory; it belongs to the Lord of the Manor, who has attached another house to the living in its stead. In one gable the boy poet had his “den,” through the window an owl flew, which he tamed, talking to it with that power of reproducing the notes of birds which Lord Tennyson still retains. The rectory garden, with its trailing roses, its twilight grotto, its sweetness of purple spiked lavender, rose carnations, lilies, sunflowers, was the perfumed background to much of his life at Somersby.

There his brother Charles put a slate into his hand one morning, and bade him write a poem on the flowers. To this garden, in later years, Arthur Hallam came constantly; and in “In Memoriam,” we have the picture of idyllic days and evenings spent there. We see the

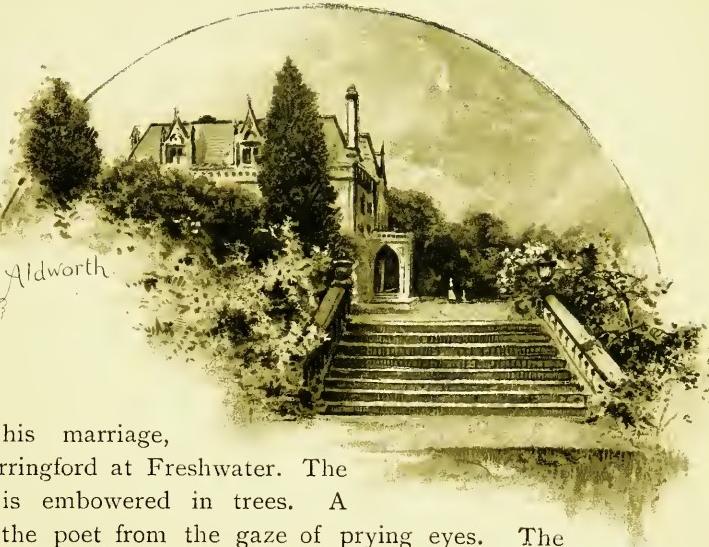
“Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
Of this flat lawn, with dusk and bright;
And thou, with all thy breadth and height
Of foliage, towering sycamore.”

In “In Memoriam” also occurs the farewell to the house, that the Tennysons quitted some time after the father's death, the lament for the garden, the brook, the windy grove.

Three mills near Somersby have long contended for the honour of having suggested to the poet, “The Miller's Daughter”—the idyll that won for him the Queen's notice, and was the first step towards the laureateship. The poet has denied that any of these mills inspired the poem; if the

thought of a mill was in his mind as he wrote, it was beautiful Grantchester Mill near Cambridge — on the tree-sheltered road, up which he often walked in his student days with Arthur Hallam.

Two years after his marriage, Tennyson purchased Farringford at Freshwater. The beautiful island home is embowered in trees. A sylvan barrier protects the poet from the gaze of prying eyes. The house is roomy and unpretentious in appearance. Its chief beauty lies



in the mantle of verdure thrown over it by creepers, that covers it from base to roof. The house is situated just below the crest of the moorland hill and overlooks

“Green Sussex fading into blue,
With one grey glimpse of sea.”

During the season, the poet is away; when Freshwater is comparatively empty, he returns. Then the figure of the venerable genius of the place, wrapped in a long loose cape that catches the wind, and adds to the romantic weirdness of his appearance, may be seen, pacing the summit of the down behind Farringford, with his son Hallam, or with one of his grand-children.

The house to which the Laureate resorts during the holiday season in the Isle of Wight is called Aldworth, on the top of Blackdown. It is surrounded by an open expanse of country, fragrant with heather, bracken, and wild flowers. We wade, knee deep, through the ferns and whortleberry bushes, a magic carpet of vegetation, from which the birds spring, and through which shy woodland creatures start at our approach, before we reach the gate of the solitary domain. Not a human dwelling is near. The poet lives apart, “hidden in the light of thought.”

